

interchange

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From left: Mary Jane Sinicki, Norma Jean Freshener, the Rev. Kristen Paulson and Pat Bellingham delivering items for lily bags at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Erie, Pa.

Lily bags, hospital bags deliver needed items, bring joy

by Terri Lackey

MANY WOMEN’S GROUPS SEW QUILTS for Lutheran World Relief or assemble school kits and hygiene kits for neighbors in time of need. Some women in Pennsylvania are putting together kits for a local hospital—but they’re not what you’d think.

These kits are for women who have gone through medical exams after sexual assault. The “lily bags” include sports bras, underpants, socks and prayer squares, said Pat Bellingham, president of the Northwestern Pennsylvania synodical women’s organization (SWO) and organizer of the Lily Project.

“Often [a victim’s] clothing is used for evidence or is not in condition to be worn again,” said Pat, a member of Luther Memorial in downtown Erie. “In the bag, we also have a knitted prayer square with a message of hope and strength.”

On the outside of each bag, Pat says, the group attaches stickers with the Women of the ELCA logo and another message: “You don’t know how strong you are until strong is all there is left to be.”

“We used the lily for our bags because it stands for strength, beauty and vitality,” she said. And because it’s the Women of the ELCA logo.

Pat said the women in Northwestern Pennsylvania’s Conference 1, made up of 14 ELCA congregations, collect undergarments in sizes small to 2XL.

“We organize the bags by size in tubs with our contact information, so when the hospital (St. Vincent’s in Erie, Penn.) runs out of bags in a particular size, they can contact us.”

The Lily Project also donates other clothing to the hospital, “like loose athletic pants and T-shirts, in case the women require more,” she said.

St. Vincent’s Hospital reports four to eight rape exams a month, Pat said. The Lily Project delivered 16 lily bags and clothing to the hospital, which they chose out of three in the area “because someone answered the phone.”

“When I talked to someone at St. Vincent’s, she said, ‘You have no idea how bad we need this.’

“So far, our women in Conference 1 are anxious to continue this mission,” Pat said. “And I have received calls from other churches in the Erie area who have heard about our project and would like to participate also.

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Women of the ELCA Interchange is a publication of the women's organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The purpose of *Interchange* is to equip and empower Women of the ELCA participants with the information and resources necessary to carry out the organization's mission. *Interchange* is distributed free of charge to ELCA congregations and select Women of the ELCA leaders. Both the Spanish and English versions are posted on our website under the publications link and are available for download.

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interchange

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News Briefs

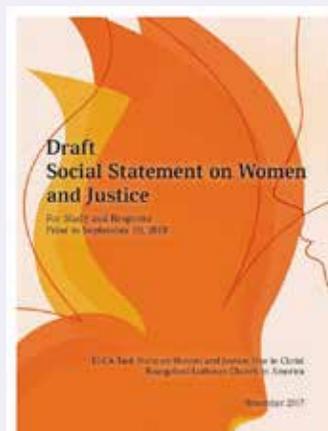
WOMEN AND JUSTICE SOCIAL STATEMENT: WHAT ARE YOU BEING CALLED TO SAY?

The ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ released a draft social statement and wants your feedback. Consider responding on your own, forming a discussion group or attending a synodical hearing.

You can find the draft social statement, its response form and related resources at ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

Responses are due by Sept. 30, 2018.

The Holy Spirit speaks through this process of communal discernment: What are you being called to say?



Faithful Friends make a difference!

Have you heard about the Faithful Friends of Women of the ELCA? These especially dedicated women make a difference in the life of our community of women created in the image of God by giving regularly, every month—automatically!

In fiscal year 2017, our Faithful Friends gave a total of \$12,268 to our churchwide organization by automatic withdrawal from either a checking account or a credit card. This is by far the easiest, most effective way to give generously to Women of the ELCA.

Will you join these 66 Faithful Friends? It's easy to do. Sign up with a credit card online at welca.org/faithfulfriendsonline or download the form at welca.org/faithful_friends. You can choose to give any monthly amount from \$10 on up. Thank you!

Save our children; observe Rachel's Day

Rachel's Day is a time set aside to mourn the loss of our children and to renounce the forces of violence and fear. At the 1996 Women of the ELCA triennial convention, voting members passed a memorial to encourage congregations to recognize the first Sunday in May as Rachel's Day, though it can be observed any time of the year. With the school shooting in Florida, this resource is especially timely.

Rachel's Day takes its name from Jeremiah 31:15–17, in which the matriarch Rachel grieves for her children. Women of the ELCA offers a free downloadable Rachel's Day resource with information about how you can work within your community and congregation to combat gun violence.

Consider using Rachel's Day resource at your church or in your community. The Rachel's Day resource includes a litany for use in a special Rachel's Day service. Find the resource at welca.org/resources.

Lily bags, hospital bags deliver needed items, bring joy

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“Nothing like assault has ever happened to me,” she said. “And when I heard about the kits (from another SWO president), it just touched me. I thought, we can do this.”

Pat said she got the idea for the project last fall on an annual conference call with the churchwide organization and other Region 8 presidents. Beverly McDonald, president of the West Virginia-Western Maryland SWO, said their synod was making similar kits.

**“You don’t know
how strong you are
until strong is
all there is left to be.”**

Women ^{of the} ELCA 

Beverly said the idea came from a group in West Virginia fighting human trafficking. And at the 2011 Triennial Gathering in Spokane, Wash., participants assembled kits that included sweatshirts and sweatpants as a part of the servant events.

Beverly works with women’s shelters that store the “hospital bags” the synodical organization provides.

“We make a bag containing a sports bra, panties, T-shirt and jogging pants,” Beverly said. “We also have our S.T.U.F.F (sheets, towels, utensils for families) Closet. These items are given when ladies leave the shelter.”

Churches with no shelters in their areas bring Beverly donations, she said. And a woman in her congregation, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran, Martinsburg, W.V., provides “very nice overnight bags” for the hospital kits.

“I cannot begin to explain the joy that I receive in delivering these items,” Beverly said.



Terri Lackey (terri.lackey@elca.org) is director for communication for Women of the ELCA.

Put resolutions on your convention to-do checklist

SYNODICAL WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS (SWOs) exist to support women in congregations. Many of our synodical women’s organizations are completing last-minute tasks for their convention season, which runs from April through November.

Along with electing leadership, the SWO conventions give voice to its participants, report congregational unit work and set the direction for collective and future work.

Resolutions should be on your to-do checklist. Submitting resolutions is a way for units to speak to their SWO about matters important to them. And, if needed, the SWO can choose to send them to a triennial convention.

Our history is filled with resolutions and memorials that called a community of women to action. Not every resolution becomes a memorial that is sent to the triennial, but each one documents what is important to you—as women of faith.

Format a resolution by 1. using a descriptive title, 2. using “whereas” clauses that describe the problem or issue and provide history or context, and 3. including “therefore be it resolved” statement(s) that describe the requested action.

Email Valora K Starr (valora.starr@elca.org) for more information or visit welca.org under “Tools for Leaders.”

Ribbon-cutting ceremony shines light on Phebe Hospital

by Eva James Yeo

GIVING THANKS WAS THE CENTRAL PURPOSE of my journey to Liberia as 11 of us traveled to be a part of the Nov. 30, 2017, ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new solar panels at Phebe Hospital. I attended with other Women of the ELCA representatives and the RREAL staff who oversaw the solar panel installation.

And your gifts of nearly \$600,000 made it happen.

The completion of the PV (photovoltaics) for Phebe project is a testament to how Women of the ELCA can make a difference in our congregations, communities and world when we work together. The solar panels are expected to save Phebe Hospital about \$35,000 a year.

Fundraising efforts are underway for the second “Skip the Grid” solar project in Liberia: Current for Curran. Nearly \$20,000 of the \$200,000 needed has been raised for solar panels to be installed for Curran Hospital in northern Liberia.

How it started

The seed idea for getting solar panels for Phebe Hospital began in 2012 when several women traveled to Liberia for the Women of the ELCA 25th anniversary tour. The global education trip was planned by Valora K Starr, director of discipleship for Women of the ELCA, to practice accompaniment and learn from our sisters in Liberia: The National Lutheran Church Women Fellowship of Liberia.

I was on that trip as well, and with our Liberian sisters, we discussed the future of women and girls, and we visited Phebe Hospital to learn about the effects of malaria.

The 2012 anniversary trip made an impression on two women who were the initial force behind the Phebe solar project: Mary Jo Mettler and Mary Kay Sloan of Minnesota. Both women were at the ribbon-cutting ceremony last November.

After the 2012 trip, the Northeastern Minnesota Synodical Women’s Organization brought a memorial to the Ninth Triennial Convention (2014) in Charlotte, N.C., asking for support with the solar project.

Current at Curran

Last November, we traveled to Curran Hospital in rural northern Liberia, where we saw the hospital’s need for solar-generated power. The hospital was built in 1924 and has 125 beds and outpatient services. It provides health care for 23 communities. As Phebe did, Curran must use costly backup diesel generators when the electricity supply fails.

Bold Women in Liberia

On our final day in Liberia, we gathered with the women at St. Peter’s Lutheran Church for thanksgiving, songs of praise and prayer.

Mary Jo thanked the Liberian women for giving her courage to act on her faith and pursue the solar project. Valora asked, “What keeps you going as women of the church in Liberia?” Most agreed that meeting together for prayer and Bible study gives them the strength and support to serve others and God. They said they’re committed



Photo by Jason Edens of participants in the ribbon-cutting ceremony standing in front of the new solar panels



From left: Eva James Yeo, Mary Kay Sloan, Mary Jo Mettler, Valora Starr



Leymah Gbowee speaks at Phebe Hospital ribbon cutting

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Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls grants totaling \$6,000 go to six congregational women's units

by Valora K Starr

The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. (Psalm 85:12)

Shortly after the Tenth Triennial Gathering in July 2017 where we held our Run, Walk and Roll, we had a flood of interest in Raising up Healthy Women and Girls seed grants. Donations collected for the Run, Walk and Roll generate money for the seed grants. In 2017, we collected about \$23,000 from the event.

A total of \$6,000 was awarded to the congregational units that received 2018-2019 Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls seed grants. They included: Ascension Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, Calif.; Bethel Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill.; Calvary Lutheran Church, Willmar, Minn.; Faith Lutheran Church, Forest Lake, Minn.; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Holland, Mich.; and Saint John's, Jacksonville, Fla.

The units will use the seed grants for a twice-annual national spiritual retreat in partnership with a Lutheran Bible camp; two mentoring programs involving women and girls; a healthy cooking and eating program; addressing loneliness in girls, young moms and women over 50; and educating others about human trafficking.

These six health initiatives bring the total to nearly 70 units who have used Women of the ELCA Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls seed grants since 2010 to make



a difference in the emotional, spiritual and physical health of women and girls in their congregations and communities. The Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls initiative was created in 2004.

Seed grants are restricted to Women of the ELCA units who hope to expand their ministry in the community. Applicants said the three-question application process “called them to think, do research, build relationships with people outside their congregation

and act boldly.”

Units receiving grants are expected to:

- bring together women in the congregational unit and community;
- meet the goals of the health initiative;
- design a replicable program;
- agree to re-seed by making a financial contribution to the seed grant program; and
- provide a final report.



Valora K Starr (valora.starr@elca.org) is director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA. To learn more, visit welca.org/ruhgw.

Phebe Hospital

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to encouraging the next generation to get involved by asking them to plan social events, coordinate speakers on interesting topics and provide leadership roles.

What keeps you going as a woman who participates in Women of the ELCA?



Eva James Yeo (eva.yeo@elca.org) is director of membership for Women of the ELCA. (To read this story online, complete with links and names of those who attended, visit: <http://bit.ly/welcaphebe>)

Our exhibit at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit: A heavy topic for a lively event

by Elizabeth McBride

A STEADY STREAM OF ENERGIZED TEENS and adult leaders moved through the Women of the ELCA human trafficking exhibit space at the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit.

Those of us staffing the exhibit space unpacked hundreds of hygiene items to be assembled by youth for giveaway to local agencies, some serving homeless LGBTQ youth. Our exhibit displayed how these homeless teens are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking. And yet, the display also showed that there is no socioeconomic thread among trafficked victims.

It was a heavy topic for this lively event—a mature subject for a gathering of church-going youth. But Women of the ELCA is committed to spreading awareness about human trafficking.

Women of the ELCA again will be part of the interactive exhibit area at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston in June. Because of a resolution to end human trafficking approved at our Tenth Triennial Convention (2017) last summer, we are again inviting youth to be part of a service project that helps organizations in the area serve victims of trafficking.

In 2015, as the youth gathering was ending, a group of excited teens who had visited our space the day before came back to let us know they were affected by what they learned.

They gave us \$55 that they had pooled to put toward the work of ending human trafficking. They said they wanted to spread awareness of human trafficking at their church, school and community. They knew the work would take commitment, and they believed financially supporting the cause would be a tangible gesture.



That was a powerful moment for me. We had started the week wanting to share how our organization cares about ending human trafficking. We ended the week with teens joining our efforts.

Before the 2015 Detroit event, we invited Women of the ELCA participants to help us with the cost of purchasing hygiene products for the project. You responded by donating more than \$10,000 to the cause.

As a result, we filled 1,500 bags of hygiene items for seven local human trafficking organizations in the Detroit area. Your gifts also helped with the cost of producing the exhibit space and learning materials.

We are inviting you to help us again this summer with our exhibit. Share your tangible expression of faith by donating money that will purchase hygiene items for organizations in Houston that serve victims and survivors of human trafficking.

We have both tangible and non-tangible ways—like prayer—to end human trafficking. If you would like to support our efforts, say a prayer, and then visit welca.org/humantrafficking to donate.

You and your women's group can support our exhibit at the ELCA Youth Gathering this summer. Please visit welca.org/humantrafficking to donate.



Elizabeth McBride (elizabeth.mcbride@elca.org) is the director for intergenerational programs and editor of Cafe.

Watch for *Gather's* newest thought-provoking studies

GATHER'S SPRING AND SUMMER 2018 issues will feature two thought-provoking Bible studies you won't want to miss.

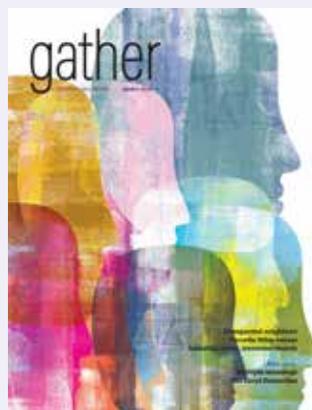
May 2018: All are welcome

Each May, *Gather* takes a break from multi-session Bible studies to offer a one-session devotional on an intergenerational theme.

The May 2018 devotional is written by the Rev. Julie A. Kanarr, pastor at Christ Lutheran Church in Belfair, Wash. Kanarr helps *Gather* readers consider how groups and congregations can open their ministry to diverse newcomers. Through examples of biblical welcome and hospitality, Kanarr also leads us to discover ways to define ourselves beyond ideas about age that can often be damaging to women. Ultimately, Kanarr encourages us to define ourselves as God does—through love.

June and July/August 2018: Prayer

For summer 2018, theologian Anna Madsen of the OMG: Center for Theological Conversation (omgcenter.com) shares three sessions focused on the practice of prayer:



SESSION ONE: The paradoxes of prayer (1 Samuel 12:16–23)

In the first session on prayer, *Gather* readers will investigate the paradoxical truths of this spiritual practice.

SESSION TWO: The practices of prayer (Psalm 19:14)

In the second session, *Gather* readers look at different ways to pray, what

each might offer and how knowing an array of prayer styles can enrich one's devotional life.

SESSION THREE: The products of prayer (Romans 8:26–28)

In the final session of this series, *Gather* readers investigate the effects prayer can have personally, communally and on the mission of the church.

For more information on these and other upcoming *Gather* Bible studies, visit gathermagazine.org/bible-study.

Calendar

For information on any of these events, contact Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, or email Women.ELCA@elca.org.

APRIL

20–21 **Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (5H) SWO convention**, Bethany Lutheran Church, Rice Lake, Wis.

21 **LaCrosse Area (5L) SWO convention**, Living Hope Lutheran Church, Ettrick, Wis.

27 **Allegheny (8C) SWO convention**, Grace Lutheran Church, State College, Pa.

MAY

4–5 **Saint Paul Area (3H) SWO convention**, Christ Lutheran Church, Lake Elmo, Minn.

5 **Metropolitan Washington D.C. (8G) SWO convention**, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Springfield, Va.

11–12 **Northwestern Pennsylvania (8A) SWO convention**, Olmstead Manor, Ludlow, Pa.

18–19 **Southwestern Pennsylvania (8B) SWO convention**, Bishop Connare Center, Greensburg, Pa.

JUNE

2 **Southeastern Pennsylvania (7F) SWO convention**, Messiah Lutheran Church, Downingtown, Pa.

2 **Caribbean (9F) SWO convention**, Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey, Carolina, Puerto Rico

4–6 **Northeastern Minnesota (3E) SWO convention**, Sugar Lake Lodge, Cohasset, Minn.

8–9 **South Carolina (9C) SWO convention**, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Columbia, S.C.

16 **Northeastern Iowa (5F) SWO convention**, Wartburg College, Wartburg, Iowa

23 **Southeastern Iowa (5D) SWO convention**, Windsor Heights Lutheran Church, Windsor Heights, Iowa

22–24 **North Carolina (9B) SWO convention**, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, N.C.

23 **Western Iowa (5E) SWO convention**, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Atlantic, Iowa

28–30 **South Dakota (3C) SWO convention**, Abby of the Hills, Summit, S.D.

29–30 **Southwestern Minnesota (3F) SWO convention**, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Cloud, Minn.

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Dated material for immediate delivery

Spring 2018

Please route to:

- Women of the ELCA leaders**
- pastor(s)**
- other church leaders**

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

Tripling our life-changing ministry through Katie's Fund

by Audrey Novak Riley

Last fall, your churchwide board approved an exciting new initiative—The All Anew Campaign for Katie's Fund—with the goal of *tripling* our endowed Katie's Fund by the 2020 Triennial Convention and Gathering. That means tripling the life-changing ministry that Katie's Fund can make possible!

The total goal of The All Anew Campaign for Katie's Fund is to grow the fund from its current total of about \$1.5 million to \$4.5 million by July 2020. Your elected board members and other dedicated women from throughout the church are forming a leadership circle—Katie's Sisters—to get The All Anew Campaign off to a rousing start, with a goal of raising \$1 million in gifts and commitments.

Our friends at the InFaith Foundation are offering their gift-planning expertise to women who'd like to learn more about how they can put their assets to work with a commitment to The All Anew Campaign for Katie's Fund.

As an endowed fund, the money held in Katie's Fund is invested carefully to generate income. That annual income—which is generally about 4 percent of the amount invested—may be used by the churchwide women's organization for leadership development, living theology and global connections. Your generous support of Katie's Fund, through regular gifts and through The All Anew Campaign for Katie's Fund, really makes a difference in women's lives. Thank you and watch for more information about The All Anew Campaign for Katie's Fund as it becomes available!



Audrey Novak Riley (audrey.riley@elca.org) is director of development and stewardship for Women of the ELCA.